

VANADIUM CORPORATION OF AMERICA

HAER No. CO-81-B

(VCA), NATURITA MILL, WEIGHING OFFICE AND STATION
approximately three miles northwest of Naturita,
between Colorado State Highway and
the San Miguel River
Vicinity of Naturita
Montrose County
Colorado

HAER
COLO
43-NATU.V
1B-

PHOTOGRAPH

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Denver, Colorado 80225-0287

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

VANADIUM CORPORATION OF AMERICAN (VCA) NATURITA MILL,
WEIGHING OFFICE AND STATION HAER No. CO-81-B

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Location: At center south edge of mill complex, approximately three miles northwest of Naturita, between Colorado State Highway 141 to the southwest, and the San Miguel River to the northeast; in the NW1/4 of the SW1/4 of Section 14, Township 46 North, Range 16 West

Date of Construction: 1960-61

Designer: VCA Drafting Department - Durango

Builder: Built by VCA employees working under the direction of Troy Newland, master mechanic, Tom Kelly, assistant master mechanic, and Bob Newland, mill supervisor

Present Owner: Cyprus-Amax Minerals Corporation, 9100 E. Mineral Circle, Englewood, CO, 80112

Present Use: Vacant / Not in Use

Significance: The VCA Naturita Mill Weighing Office and Station was constructed in 1960-61 as part of an effort to reconstruct the facility as an experimental uranium and vanadium ore concentrating facility. Between 1958 (when the milling operation had closed) and 1961, VCA had been paying miners to ship raw ore to the company's Durango mill. By first concentrating the ore at Naturita, VCA hoped to greatly reduce the volume of ore shipped to Durango, and correspondingly reduce the company's shipping costs. In the end, however, the cost to concentrate the ore at Naturita was greater than the savings gained by reducing the tonnage shipped to Durango. As a result, the concentrating facility was not in operation for long. It closed in early 1963. During this two year period, the Weighing Office and Station served as the entry point for all ore brought to the facility to be concentrated. At the beginning of the concentrating process, each load of ore was received here and was allocated a serial number identifying who produced it and where it had been mined. After leaving the Mill Weighing Office and Station, the ore was subsequently sorted, crushed, agitated in an acid and water solution, thickened, and dried. When completed, this concentrating process produced a uranium and vanadium concentrate in the form of dry, marble-sized, pellets. This material was placed in large concrete storage bins from where it was picked up by a rubber-tired loader and deposited into trucks for transport to the VCA's mill in Durango. Apart from the main concentrating process, a small percentage of each load

of ore was separated out for chemical analysis to determine its vanadium and uranium values.

General Description: The Weighing Office and Station was a small, single-story rectangular building with a smaller rectangular office vestibule facing the weighing platform and mill facility to the north. It was constructed of concrete masonry unit (CMU) walls on a parged CMU foundation, and read as a companion building to the adjacent mill Office Building (HAER No. CO-81-A), with a similar green, CMU base veneer.

Its shallow-sloped, gabled roofs, with deep overhangs, were comprised of gravel-ballasted, built-up asphalt over tongue and groove decking, supported by 4x6 built-up beams.

A single entry door of half-light, wood panel was located on the southeast side. Windows units, most facing the weighing platform, consisted of steel industrial sash casement and picture windows under multi-pane transoms.

A primary feature associated with the building was the large, rectangular concrete weighing pad, located immediately to the northwest. The building interior contained the following support equipment: A Toledo scale and gas heater in the northwest room, and a Braun "Pulverizer" and Greine-Hendry Co. "Ore Dryer" (kiln) in the (rear) southeast room.